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“John Owen, Lucy Hutchinson and the experience of defeat”

Crawford Gribben

Abstract:

In the early 1670s, Lucy Hutchinson was attending the London congregation led by John Owen, one of the principal Restoration nonconformist theologians, and translated from Latin parts of one of his most substantial theological treatises, *Theologoumena pantodapa* (1661). Owen’s high Calvinist ideas are regularly discussed outside their polemical and political contexts, even though he was deeply engaged in these contexts, and made sometimes surprising interventions in contemporary debates, even in the experience of defeat. Owen’s publications in the early 1660s suggest that he responded to the end of the Cromwellian era by disavowing his commitment to some of the political and religious ideals which he had publicly defended. But this disavowal should not be taken at face value. This article argues that Hutchinson may have begun to engage with Owen’s work as his response to the experience of defeat may have involved a strategic duplicity.

Keywords:

John Owen, Restoration, Edward Hyde, satire, John Vincent Cane

John Owen (1616-83) was an extraordinary figure, whose life and writing negotiated some of the most unpredictable moments in English history. Born during the reign of James I into a family of puritan conformists, and ordained by the bishop of Oxford during the reign of Charles I, Owen became a radical preacher to the Long Parliament (from 1646), preacher of the regicide (1649), chaplain to Oliver Cromwell on the invasions of Ireland and Scotland (1649-50), dean of Christ Church (1651-60) and vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford (1652-57), principal mover in the Cromwellian religious settlement and active agent in the downfall of Richard Cromwell’s

administration (1659). The changing legal and cultural circumstances of the reign of Charles II forced Owen to withdraw from public life and facilitated the reenergising of his publishing career in defence of high Calvinist theology and the toleration of protestant dissenters: Owen wrote more than half of his work in the twenty years after the Restoration. Sedentary and political, Owen was at times frustrated with his physical inability to facilitate the life of his mind. "I have hated the feeble powers of my body," he complained in October 1657, as he resigned as vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford, "nearly incapable of keeping pace with my designs."¹ Whatever else he was, Owen was a thinker.

Owen's ideas have long dominated his readers' sense of his importance. He has been most often remembered as a writer – and his output was prodigious. His eight million or so words were published in eighty books spanning a variety of genres, including sermons, theological treatises and an encyclopedic account of the history of redemption, parts of which were translated from Latin into English by Lucy Hutchinson.² His work appeared in a variety of lengths, ranging from a Latin poem of sixteen lines to a commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews published in "four hefty tomes exceeding 2,000 folio pages and over two million words," a text which became "one of the largest expositions of the post-Reformation era if not the entire history of biblical interpretation."³ Owen's publications addressed a variety of audiences, from the unlearned families of his first parish in Essex to his undergraduate students in Oxford, from politicians in London and Edinburgh to his international scholarly peers. His readers did not always find his arguments convincing, but they were often impressed by his gifts. Richard Baxter, his most enduring opponent, admitted that Owen's "great ... Worth and Learning" were "too well known (to need my proof)."⁴ Vincent Alsop, a Presbyterian satirist, described Owen as "Judicious, Wise, and Learned," and claimed that even those who dismissed his conclusions had copies of his books in their "Studies and Libraries" and could not afford to be without them.⁵ Even for those who dismissed his conclusions, Owen was inescapably "learned." As Puritanism evolved into dissent, the circulation of Owen's works made possible the emergence of "imagined communities" of readers, while the literary network which

developed around Owen himself included some of those remembered as the most significant authors of the period – including John Bunyan, Andrew Marvell and Lucy Hutchinson.⁶

In the last ten years, scholarship on Owen has grown exponentially, perhaps because of the approaching four hundredth anniversary of his birth. The focus of this scholarship on Owen's ideas may be justified because he committed so little else to posterity. Owen famously made little effort at self-fashioning: a prolific but always guarded writer, he left nothing that could be compared to the diary of his exact contemporary and sometime clerical colleague, Ralph Josselin (1617-83).⁷ And so we need to surmise a great deal about his family: in his millions of published words, Owen made no reference to his mother or to his siblings, and only one reference to his father.⁸ His wives and children are likewise unmentioned, though his first wife and all but one of his children predeceased him. And we need similarly to surmise a great deal about his experiences of congregational life. Owen does not reflect upon his experience as a minister: he does not appear to have left any account of his conversion or call to the ministry; any minutes of his meetings with pastoral colleagues or members of his congregations; and even any record of which churches he was associated with at critical moments in his theological and political career. For large parts of the most important parts of Owen's life, particularly in the 1650s, we simply do not know which church he was attending – or even, more exactly, whether he was attending any church at all. These silences – and the strategy of modesty or even secrecy to which they point – illustrate the danger of approaching Owen on his own terms. For Owen's historical significance is more than the sum total of his ideas, and the narrowly theological focus preferred by much of the relevant scholarship cannot describe the significance of his relationships with some of his most important readers – including Lucy Hutchinson, who engaged in a serious way with Owen's writing during her "experience of defeat."⁹

There is much about Owen's relationship with Hutchinson which remains opaque. It is possible that their acquaintance pre-dated the Restoration, though Hutchinson's memoir of her husband's life provides no evidence to substantiate the possibilities: John Hutchinson, who signed

the king's death warrant, may have attended the sermon which Owen preached to parliament on the day after the regicide, and, given the rather small numbers of those committed to the revolutionary regime in its earliest years, it is likely that the two men knew each other. We can trace the first direct links between Owen and Hutchinson in the early 1670s. Lucy Hutchinson was attending his London congregation around 1673, and her close friend Lady Annesley, wife of the earl of Anglesey, who would hold the office of Lord Privy Seal after 1673, was a member of the church.¹⁰ Hutchinson engaged Robert Ferguson, who would also act as Owen's pastoral assistant, as Latin tutor for her son.¹¹ But Owen never refers to Hutchinson, although she attended his congregation and spent considerable time translating one of his most demanding works.

Hutchinson's serious and extended engagement with Owen's work illustrates something of the place of women in the strongly cerebral, if ideologically versatile, subcultures of the godly in the later Restoration. Hutchinson's imagination appears to have become more conservative and more overtly theological after the death of her husband. In the 1650s, she had translated Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, a surprisingly unorthodox text for the concentrated study of a godly woman. By the mid-1660s, in the aftermath of her bereavement, Hutchinson appears to have begun a detailed study of Calvin's *Institutes*, and, perhaps around 1673, moved from that project into another in which she translated into English large sections from Owen's most difficult book to date, *Theologoumena pantodapa* (1661), a theological prolegomena of extraordinary topical and disciplinary range.¹²

Lucy Hutchinson's interest in Owen's work was far from unique among puritan women. The appeal to women of Owen's demanding preaching and writing has not generally been considered, but we know that his ministry was appreciated by women across the social spectrum. Their number included non-elite women such as Dorothy Emett, who, when applying for membership of an Independent church in Dublin in the early 1650s, remembered that "Mr. Owen was the first man by whose means, and Ministry I became sensible of my condition," though she quickly abandoned whatever she had been taught of his views on spirituality, being assured of her salvation by a voice

she heard in her sleep.¹³ Owen's work also appealed to women of higher rank. Anne Hamilton, the countess of Clanbrasill, wife of James Hamilton, Lord Viscount Claneboy and earl of Clanbrazil, appears to have obtained her copy of Owen's *A continuation of the exposition of ... Hebrews ... the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters* (1680) immediately upon its publication.¹⁴

Occasional marks in margins suggest how she might have been engaging with this theologically demanding and technically advanced commentary. And elite women continued to support Owen's principles after his death – sometimes with real cost to their reputations. In January 1684, Roger Morrice recorded that Lady Anglesey, Hutchinson's friend, was among nineteen congregants arrested "at the meeting that was formerly Dr Owens, and kept in Custody till night, and then Bayled, ... to appeare the last Wednesday being the first day of the Term."¹⁵ From the 1650s until the 1680s, in demanding and dangerous circumstances, Owen's work helped godly women engage in, and perpetuate, the patriarchal, strongly cerebral, and often angular cultures of dissent – and may have helped Hutchinson understand the intellectual and ideological versatility required of those who would endure the dark days of Restoration.

I

Lucy Hutchinson's project to translate large sections of Owen's *Theologoumena pantodapa* (1661) is one of the most remarkable evidences of the manner in which women readers were engaging with his work. The small amount of scholarship published on *Theologoumena pantodapa* has tended to read the text in relation to emerging debates about theological method among European protestant scholastic theologians.¹⁶ The often technical arguments of these recent publications offer a helpful reminder that *Theologoumena pantodapa* is not, after all, a "biblical theology," as its recent (and indispensable) translation into English is titled, but is in fact an almost encyclopaedic historical account of the history of ideas associated within Owen's doctrine of revelation: the book offers an expansive account of the history of language, literature and culture to support its argument that the

original knowledge of God given to Adam and Eve slowly dissipated, except among the descendants of Abraham, among whom it was gradually corrupted.¹⁷ It was the expansiveness of this argument which perhaps justified Hutchinson's close attention, for, as David Norbrook has noted, the arguments of *Theologoumena pantodapa* take on additional resonance in the social and political contexts of the Restoration. Norbrook has argued that *Theologoumena pantodapa* represents Owen's prescient attempt to challenge opinions which "seemed likely" to become the "ideological foundations" of the restored monarchy. Similarly, he continues, Owen was taking aim at the ideological foundations of the church settlement which he may have anticipated would be settled after the ejections of nonconformists in August 1662, mounting a "stringent onslaught on the idea of a 'natural theology' that might provide a common ground for belief outside either Scripture or the traditions of the church."¹⁸ This reading of the text, emphasising its continuity with Owen's earlier political and theological commitments, has obvious merits, especially insofar as Owen is seen to be advancing a considered theological and political platform in the changing circumstances of the Restoration.

Theologoumena pantodapa highlights discontinuities as well as continuities with Owen's earlier theological and political positions, and represents a complex new stage in the development of his thinking. The book offers the first evidences that Owen had begun to study the work of the Dutch theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), for example: the structure of Owen's work reflects that of Cocceius's *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* (1648), and it also developed Cocceius's idea of the *pactum salutis*, a pre-creation covenant of redemption made between persons of the Trinity.¹⁹ But the structural and thematic influences of the Dutch high Calvinist perhaps underplay the extent to which *Theologoumena pantodapa* is a troubled text. While reflecting Owen's knowledge of Oxford's archival holdings, it reflected the changed circumstances of the former vice-chancellor, now living with the threat of government reprisal. Owen had lost much of his earlier confidence: the text's first signal of retreat was his explanation in his preface to the reader that "I am worth nothing and live quietly and in obscurity," being "thoroughly weary of

controversy.”²⁰ And that retreat continued, as Owen refused to enter the debate about the hypothetical universalist theory of the atonement, a debate in which he had previously spilled much ink but which he now regarded as a “matter of irrelevance.”²¹ Instead, *Theologoumena pantodapa* constructed a theology of culture, offering a global and interdisciplinary history of Christian theology in its myriad linguistic, geographical and cultural contexts. Owen’s project was to demythologise the religions of classical antiquity, proving them to be corruptions of the natural revelation given by God to Adam and Eve. Part of his argument was developed in a discursive analysis of poetry, from both antique and more recent English authors, including Chaucer, which took seriously some of their most fantastic claims about ghosts and vampires to construct a critique of the religious-rhetorical foundations of social control from antiquity to the late medieval period.²² Lucy Hutchinson, who moved to this work on Owen from her earlier translation project, would have found in the text of *Theologoumena pantodapa* a rationale for thinking about Lucretius, an author whose work the book also considered.²³ Hutchison may also have read Owen’s text as illustrative of the means by which dissenting literary activity could circumvent the horrific circumstances of the 1660s. Remembering her own vacillations, which preserved her husband’s life in the period immediately following the Restoration, she may have understood better than many of Owen’s modern readers the strategic ambiguities and rhetorical gambits required of old republicans engaged in literary work in the early 1660s.

II

Historical theologians have often noticed that *Theologoumena pantodapa* represented a significant methodological reversal for Owen’s work, but they have generally failed to notice that this reversal is part of a much broader reconsideration of his previously held opinions. In the immediate aftermath of the great ejection (1662), which decisively ended puritan hopes for comprehension within the state church, Owen appears to have experienced something of an intellectual breakdown.

Perhaps Owen's commitment to understanding contemporary events through the lens of providence had provoked a much greater degree of self-scrutiny and self-criticism than his biographers have imagined. But the effect of this reversal was systemic. If Hutchinson were encountering Owen's written work for the first time in the early 1660s, and if she were encountering this work through its most recently published material, she would have been engaging with texts which would have seemed entirely uncharacteristic of his former intellectual, theological and political confidence: Hutchinson would have been engaging with an Owen whose "experience of defeat" appeared to have become almost pathological.

If *Theologoumena pantodapa* illustrated Owen's movement away from scholastic theological method, the texts which followed it represented a much broader social and political shift. These texts represented an entirely different genre of theological polemic, and were by far the wittiest and most playful of his writing to date: that alone should make us suspicious of their intention.

Animadversions on a treatise entitled 'Fiat lux' (published in June 1662²⁴) and *A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat lux'* (1664) were written by Owen in response to a recent work of Catholic apologetic by John Vincent Cane (1661). The background to the production of *Animadversions on a treatise entitled 'Fiat lux'* is obscure, but it appears that Edward Hyde, who had recently been elevated as the first earl of Clarendon, may have lent Cane's book to Owen for a "few days," requesting that Owen should respond to it.²⁵ Hyde's link with Owen is perhaps surprising. In early 1660, as events progressed towards restoration, he had been attempting to find a church settlement which the puritan majority would find acceptable, and had further indicated his sympathy for Presbyterians and Independents during the Convention's discussion of the post-Restoration religious settlement.²⁶ But his own position was made particularly difficult around October 1660 when his daughter, Anne, admitted her affair with James, duke of York, the brother of the king and the court's leading Catholic: the surprise discovery that Anne was pregnant was followed by the shock that she and James had been secretly married.²⁷ As Hyde called for his daughter to be put on trial, the royal family rushed to patch up the union. James publicly recognised his wife as duchess of York and the

king offered her father, then still Baron Hyde, the earldom of Clarendon.²⁸ In the aftermath of the scandal, the details of Hyde's preference for the toleration of protestant dissenters were lost in a blizzard of allegations about his sympathy for Catholics and his attempt to inveigle his way into the royal family. But Clarendon's nadir was represented by the publication of *Fiat lux*, an apology for Catholicism which opened and closed by quoting his own words and thus appropriated his reputation for a cause he claimed to abominate.²⁹ If Clarendon wished to re-establish his reputation as a vigorous protestant, he would have found Owen a useful tool. Clarendon appears to have lent *Fiat lux* to Owen for a "few days" – just long enough for Owen, who habitually exaggerated the speed at which he wrote, to compose a response of several hundred thousand words in length.

Owen's responses in *Animadversions* and *A Vindication* clearly served Clarendon's interests. His defence of the rights of the "chief families" of England was balanced by steady loyalty to the king and by support of the protestant cause: while Owen admitted that he knew "no party among Christians that is in all things to be admired, nor any that is in all things to be condemned," he remained convinced that "the most ready way to go out of the catholic [church] is to go into the Roman."³⁰ But these texts also represented a dramatic change in Owen's beliefs. He used the texts to continue his retreat from his previously held convictions. He continued the attack on scholastic theology, which he had begun in *Theologoumena pantodapa*: the schoolmen are those, Owen claimed, who "out of a mixture of philosophy, traditions, and Scripture, all corrupted and perverted, have hammered that faith which was afterward confirmed under so many anathemas at Trent."³¹ Nor was this an attack on Catholic scholasticism, as some of Owen's commentators have claimed. Scholastic method was to be abominated wherever it was found: "Some learn their divinity out of the late and modern schools, both in the Reformed and Papal church," he worried, but "many things ... give me cause to doubt" that it "hath any better success in the Reformed churches."³² Owen combined this uncertainty about the validity of Reformed education with some sense of embarrassment about his earlier political commitments. Owen denied that the previous two decades of strife had been at all indicative of the fissiparous character of Reformed religion. He

abominated what he rather euphemistically described as “our late unhappy troubles.”³³ He disclaimed any involvement in civil war or revolution, stating that he “never had a hand in, nor gave consent unto, the raising of war in these nations, nor unto any political alteration in them, - no, not to any one that was amongst us during our revolutions.” Instead, Owen claimed, he had “lived and acted under them the things wherein he thought his duty consisted,” and challenged “all men to charge him with doing the least personal injury to any.” Nevertheless, Owen continued, he was “amongst them who bless God and the king for the act of oblivion.”³⁴ He insisted that he “doth, and ever did, abhor swords, and guns, and crusades, in matters of religion and conscience, with all violence,” and that he “ever thought it an uncouth sight to see men marching with crosses on their backs to destroy Christians.”³⁵

Owen, in other words, was using the invitation to defend Clarendon’s reputation to consolidate his own. But this was a markedly revisionist, and more than slightly oblique, programme of self-fashioning, for Owen had published *Animadversions* anonymously. His authorship was widely suspected – and not least by the author of *Fiat lux*, whose response to Owen’s *Animadversions* was vociferous and personal. “I have been told of late,” he explained in 1663, “that the Authour of the *Animadversions* upon *Fiat lux* is one Doctour O N.” John Vincent Cane had seen through Owen’s defence of a generic Protestantism, and pushed back against the arguments of one who he considered to have been “a Protestant against Popery which you found down, a Presbyterian against Protestancy which you threw down, an Independent against Presbyterianry which you kept down.”³⁶ Cane’s exposure of the identity of his antagonist made Owen’s claims ironic.

For Owen used *Animadversions* and *A Vindication* to position himself as a defender of monarchy and the established church.³⁷ He described Charles I as “our late king, of glorious memory,” and celebrated the reign of Charles II, under which, while “our present sovereign sways the sceptre of this land,” Owen believed himself to be secure from the dangers of “fire and fagot,” and hoped that “our posterity may be so under his offspring for many generations” to come.³⁸ Charles II, Owen continued, was “not only the greatest Protestant but the greatest potentate in

Europe ... it is no small satisfaction unto me to contemplate on the heavenly principle of gospel peace planted in the noble soil of royal ingenuity and goodness; when fruit may be expected to the great profit and advantage of the whole world.”³⁹ This defence of monarchy had obvious implications for his construction of religious establishment. He defended the historic claim of the English monarchy to be “head” of the English church, for example, and positioned himself likewise as a defender of the Church of England and its statement of faith.⁴⁰ In the 39 Articles, he argued, “the practical truths of the gospel ... are maintained and asserted in the church of England, and by all Protestants.”⁴¹ Consequently, he continued, “I embrace the doctrine of the church of England, as declared in the Thirty-Nine Articles, and other approved writings of the most famous bishops and other divines thereof.”⁴² After all, he explained, differences between protestants were only verbal, and English Christians had to look beyond the reformation to earlier models of church life: “it was not Luther nor Calvin, but the word of God, and the practice of the primitive church, that England proposed for her rule and pattern in her reformation.”⁴³ Therefore, he continued, English Christians should not be burdened with subscription to more detailed confessions of faith: “He that believeth that whatever God reveals is true, and that the holy Scripture is a perfect revelation of his mind and will (wherein almost all Christians agree), need not fear that he shall be burdened with multitudes of particular articles of faith, provided he do his duty in sincerity, to come to an acquaintance with what God hath so revealed.”⁴⁴ In fact, Owen concluded, perhaps reflecting on the frustrations of his work for a Cromwellian religious settlement, confessions of faith were no more than “a Procrustes’ bed to stretch them upon, or crop them unto the size of, so to reduce them to the same opinion in all things.” The effort to impose a confession of faith would be “vain and fruitless ... that men have for many generations wearied themselves about, and yet continue so to do ... When Christians had any unity in the world, the Bible alone was thought to contain their religion ... Nor will there ever, I fear, be again any unity among them until things are reduced to the same state and condition.”⁴⁵ It was an extraordinary conclusion at which England’s principal defender of high Calvinism had arrived:

In a word, leave Christian religion unto its primitive liberty, wherein it was believed to be revealed of God, and that revelation of it to be contained in the Scripture, which men searched and studied, to become themselves, and to teach others to be, wise in the knowledge of God and living unto him, and the most of the contests that are in the world will quickly vanish and disappear. But whilst every one hath a confession, a way, a church, and its authority, which must be imposed on all others ... we may look for peace, moderation and unity, when we are here no more, and not sooner.⁴⁶

Owen's biographers have not explained this extraordinary passage in his career. His statements are astonishing. On the one hand, his work demonstrates the variety of loyalty in the Restoration, if we take it at face value: Asty records that Owen was offered preferment within the Church of England on the basis of his performance in these texts.⁴⁷ But on the other hand, as Owen recognised in these works, "nothing likes us more than dissimulation."⁴⁸

Owen's stylistically awkward admission of his preference for dissimulation may provide a key to the proper interpretation of these texts – as well as a warning for that substantial body of scholarship which takes Owen's arguments at face value. For, throughout this period, Owen's writing did not always correspond with his deeds, nor did his ideas always cohere. In the immediate aftermath of the Restoration, for example, Owen gathered a church in his home in Stadham. Several students from Oxford, among them William Penn, the future Quaker leader, regularly rode the seven miles to Stadham to join the congregation in worship. In mid-January 1661, just days after the abortive Fifth Monarchist rising in London, members of the Oxfordshire militia surprised Owen's congregation, and confiscated 6 or 7 cases of pistols.⁴⁹ While no-one was arrested, the congregation was clearly being watched, and perhaps for good reason. Owen lived quietly after the election of the Cavalier Parliament in April 1661, but the congregation's meetings appeared to continue. Certainly, in the spring of 1662, William Penn and several other students who were discovered to be attending Owen's congregation were fined for nonconformity and expelled from the University. In late April

1662, Sir William Penn shared with Samuel Pepys a letter addressed by Owen to his son, “whereby it appears his son is much perverted in his opinion.”⁵⁰ This letter, encouraging continued dissent from the religious, political and educational establishment, would have been written around the same time that Owen was upholding the rights of monarchy and religious establishment in the draft of *Animadversions*, which was published in June, while critiquing that very establishment in his contribution to the debate concerning conformity and ejection, *A discourse concerning liturgies, and their imposition* (1662). The latter text was published anonymously and without information about a publisher, and took an entirely different tack from *Animadversions*, defending the use of confessions of faith, which it described as “preservations against ... danger,” and associating the liturgical practice of the Church of England with that of the Church of Rome.⁵¹ It was hardly surprising that Owen’s group continued to be monitored. Around December 1662, Henry Bennet, the earl of Arlington, was informed of the movements of several “suspicious persons,” including Thomas Goodwin and John Owen, “who now scruple at the surplice, but used to wear velvet cassocks, and to receive from 500l. to 700l. a year from their churches.”⁵² And Owen’s satisfaction with the rule of Charles II was not so complete that he refused to consider emigration: in 1664, he was involved in negotiations about the purchase of land in New England, though the conveyance was never completed.⁵³ While Owen was arguing in print that he had accepted the Restoration settlement, he was actively working to resist it, or escape it.

III

Lucy Hutchinson’s interactions with Owen illustrate the contingent and reactive nature of late seventeenth-century dissent. Owen was a prominent figure in her friendship network and literary imagination, but the Owen texts she was encountering may have represented something very different from his earlier convictions, particularly if, in the early 1660s, she was only engaging with his work in print.

Of course, Owen's effort to re-fashion himself was nothing new. While he did not choose to admit it, Owen had a long history of changing his mind – and often, ironically, as John Vincent Cane noted, on issues with which he has become particularly identified. In the late 1640s, Owen abandoned his early view that the atonement was limited in its sufficiency to argue that it was unlimited in its sufficiency, though always limited in its efficiency; he abandoned his earlier view that the atonement was not required for sinners to be forgiven to argue that the sacrifice of God's son was essential if sin were to be forgiven; and he abandoned his earlier view that assurance was of the essence of faith to adopt the conventional wisdom of puritan spirituality that it was not. In the same period, Owen changed his mind on the subject of church government, moving from a Presbyterian to an Independent position, and, in the early 1650s, moved from arguing for something approaching a universal religious toleration to favour a much more restricted public orthodoxy. His admission in *Animadversions* of the lack of value of confessions of faith may reflect his despair at being able to gain public acceptance for even the simplest statement of religious "fundamentals" during the middle 1650s. And, perhaps most surprising of all, the advocate of toleration for orthodox protestants came to admit, less than a decade later, that he could "neither approve nor justify" any "persecutions of Catholics."⁵⁴ Owen's thinking was never static. But this reading of his writing in the early 1660s demonstrates that any scholarly focus which reads his books on their own terms, and outside of their historical contexts, runs the danger of under-estimating the extent to which Owen failed to adhere to his own arguments.

But consistency is not required for literary success. *Theologoumena pantadapa* became one of Owen's most widely read texts, being republished republished in Bremen (1684) and Frankfurt (1700), and exercising substantial influence on Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*. But Owen's work in the early 1660s also speaks to the confusion of the times. "My pen is dull, and the book that was lent me for a few days is called for," Owen explained, as he concluded his response to *Fiat lux*.⁵⁵ He seemed tired – daunted by the new world he had entered and perhaps at this stage lacking the courage to publicly confront it. "The present face of Christianity makes the world a wearisome

wilderness,” he explained, “nor should I think any thing a more necessary duty than it would be for persons of piety and ability to apologize for the religion of Jesus Christ, and to show how unconcerned it is in the ways and practices of the most that profess it.”⁵⁶ It may now be impossible to reconstruct the incidents out of which Owen’s wittiest and most politically troubled writing emerged, but it is clear that *Theologoumena pantadapa*, the *Animadversions* and its subsequent *Vindication* represent a brief capitulation to some of the central intellectual concerns of Restoration culture, even as *A discourse concerning liturgies, and their imposition* represents the opposite.

Of course, Owen’s withdrawal from his earlier commitments did not last. His later writing was much less witty than his work in the early 1660s, and was happy to return to the use of scholastic method. In the early 1660s and beyond, Owen’s work complicates assumptions of Anglican hegemony, and evidences the emergence of a vibrant and well-capitalised nonconformist culture of religious print, capable of memorialising the events of the civil wars but also negotiating a new relationship to an often hostile government. Like Hutchinson, Owen took time to develop the changing literary and intellectual strategies required by those who would endure the “experience of defeat.”

¹ “Fifth oration” (9 October 1657), in *Oxford Orations*, ed. Toon, 45-46.

² Narveson, “The sources for Lucy Hutchinson’s *On Theology*,” 40–41.

³ Tweeddale, “John Owen’s commentary on Hebrews in context,” 50.

⁴ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 8.

⁵ Alsop, *A vindication of the faithful rebuke to a false report against the rude cavils of the pretended defence*, 10.

⁶ On the literary culture of Puritanism, see most recently Cambers, *Godly reading*.

⁷ *Diary of Ralph Josselin*, ed. Macfarlane.

⁸ Toon, *God’s Statesman*, 3.

⁹ Keeble, “‘But the Colonel’s Shadow’: Lucy Hutchinson, Women’s Writing, and the Civil War”, 227-47; Norbrook, “Memoirs and oblivion: Lucy Hutchinson and the Restoration,” 233-82. See also the discussion of

Owen's response to the end of the Cromwellian period in Christopher Hill, *The experience of defeat: Milton and some contemporaries* (1984; rpr London: Bookmarks, 1994), 164-72.

¹⁰ Norbook, "Chronology," in Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. Norbrook, xi; Norbook, "Order and Disorder: The poem and its contexts," in Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. Norbrook, xix; Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement*, 194.

¹¹ ODNB, s.v. "Hutchinson, Lucy."

¹² Norbook, "Order and Disorder: The poem and its contexts," xvi; Norbook, "Chronology," xi; Rehman, *Divine Discourse* discusses Owen's *Theologoumena pantodapa* in historical context.

¹³ Rogers, *Ohel or Bethshemesh*, 412.

¹⁴ Crossley Evans, "The maternal ancestry of Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), and the household of Ann Hamilton (c 1612–89), Countess of Clanbrassil," 302-308; Dublin: National Library of Ireland: Bruce Papers, Ms. 20,866. This copy of the commentary is held in the Special Collections unit, McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast.

¹⁵ *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice [1677-1691]*, ed. Goldie et al, ii. 444.

¹⁶ The most comprehensive discussion of the text is provided by Renhman, *Divine Discourse*.

¹⁷ John Owen, *Theologoumena pantodapa* (Oxford, 1661), was included in volume 17 of Owen, *Works*, ed. Goold, but was not included in the subsequent reprinting of this edition by the Banner of Truth Trust. An English translation/interpretation of the text appeared as *Biblical Theology: The history of theology from Adam to Christ*, ed. Stephen Westcott (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1994). While this translation is in some sense insufficient, it will be cited throughout this essay as the best available.

¹⁸ Norbook, "Order and Disorder: The poem and its contexts," xix.

¹⁹ Owen, *Biblical Theology*, trans Wescott, 205-6; van Asselt, "Covenant theology as relational theology: The contributions of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and John Owen (1618-1683) to a living Reformed theology," 67, 69. See also Owen, *Works*, 17: 382 for another reference. While scholars have generally agreed that the *pactum salutis* concept was developed by Cocceius, another Dutch Reformed theologian writing at the end of the century, Herman Witsius, traced its origins to Owen's commentary and his *Exercitationes* on Hebrews; van Asselt, "Covenant theology as relational theology," 73-74. Five of Cocceius' works were listed in *Bibliotheca Oweniana* (1684), Edward Millington's auction catalogue purporting to represent the contents of Owen's library, including a large commentary on Hebrews (1659), though the credibility of the catalogue as a reflection

of the content of Owen's library is disputable; Gribben, "John Owen, Renaissance man? The evidence of Edward Millington's *Bibliotheca Oweniana* (1684)," 321-32.

²⁰ Owen, *Biblical Theology*, trans Wescott, xlviii, 89.

²¹ Owen, *Biblical Theology*, trans Wescott, 48.

²² Owen, *Biblical Theology*, trans Wescott, 128, 133. On Owen's broader interest in and influence upon contemporary English poetry, see Gribben, "Poetry and piety: John Owen, Faithful Teate and communion with God," 197-215.

²³ Owen, *Biblical Theology*, trans Wescott, 105, 111.

²⁴ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 184.

²⁵ "Memoirs of the Life of John Owen," in *A Complete Collection of the Sermons of the Reverend and Learned John Owen*, ed. Asty, xxiii, notes that a "Person of Honour" provided Owen with a copy of *Fiat lux*, requesting that he reply to it. Goold argues that this "Person of Honour" was Hyde; "Prefatory note," Owen, *Works*, xiv. 3.

²⁶ See, for example, Hutton, *The Restoration*, 108. Dissenters continued to look to Hyde for help: in August 1661, he was the addressee of George Wither's poem, "Vox vulgi"; see, for context, Stephen Bardle, *The literary underground in the 1660s: Andrew Marvell, George Wither, Ralph Wallis, and the world of Restoration satire and pamphleteering* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 12-36.

²⁷ Hutton, *The Restoration*, 149-50.

²⁸ Hutton, *The Restoration*, 154.

²⁹ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 8; J. V. C., *Fiat lux*, 8-9, 366-68.

³⁰ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 89, 334, 395.

³¹ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 49.

³² Owen, *Works*, xiv. 315.

³³ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 8.

³⁴ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 190.

³⁵ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 193.

³⁶ [J.V.C.], *An Epistle to the authour of the Animadversions upon Fiat lux in excuse and justification of Fiat lux against the said animadversions* (1663), 108. See also J. V. C., *Three letters declaring the strange odd proceedings of Protestant divines when they write against Catholicks: by the example of Dr Taylor's Dissuasive*

against popery, Mr Whitbys Reply in the behalf of Dr Pierce against Cressy, and Dr Owens Animadversions on Fiat lux (1671).

³⁷ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 33.

³⁸ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 108, 169.

³⁹ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 254.

⁴⁰ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 107.

⁴¹ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 65.

⁴² Owen, *Works*, xiv. 196.

⁴³ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 53, 109.

⁴⁴ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 251.

⁴⁵ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 314.

⁴⁶ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 314-15.

⁴⁷ Asty, "Memoirs," p. xxiv.

⁴⁸ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 197.

⁴⁹ Cook, "A political biography of a religious Independent: John Owen, 1616-83," 285-6.

⁵⁰ Pepys' diary, 28 April 1662.

⁵¹ Owen, *Works*, xv. 28, 33.

⁵² Calendar of State Papers, Domestic series, of the reign of Charles II, 1661-1662, vol 2: June 1661-Dec1662, citing SP 29/65 f. 17. VOL LXV, 10. P. 594.

⁵³ 'America and West Indies: June 1700, 21-25', *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 18: 1700 (1910), 354-380.

⁵⁴ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 119.

⁵⁵ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 171.

⁵⁶ Owen, *Works*, xiv. 312.

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